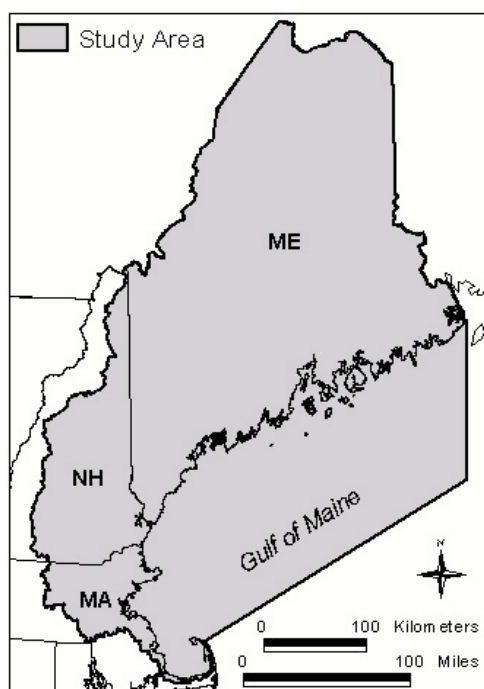


Identifying, mapping and protecting habitat in the Gulf of Maine watershed

Gulf of Maine Coastal Program

The Gulf of Maine watershed, situated in the northeast corner of the United States and the southeast corner of Canada, includes more than 43,000 square miles of land in Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts. The watershed includes the biologically productive Gulf of Maine as well as coastal habitats (salt marshes, mudflats, sandy beaches, intertidal zone, and islands) and inland waterways, wetlands, woodlands, and grasslands. The Gulf of Maine watershed provides productive nurseries for many marine fish, riverine pathways for historically abundant populations of anadromous fish, important habitat for breeding, migratory and wintering waterbirds and neotropical migrants, and vital habitat for nationally threatened and endangered species. Many who live in the Gulf of Maine watershed appreciate its biological wealth. However, habitat loss and degradation from sprawling development, wetland and associated upland loss, overharvesting, oil spills, pollution, and other cumulative effects of development threaten the ecological integrity of the watershed.



In order to protect fish and wildlife habitat for endangered, threatened or declining species in the region, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Gulf of Maine Program, in coordination with the Gulf of Maine Rivers Ecoteam, identified, mapped and ranked important fish and wildlife habitat for priority species throughout the Gulf of Maine watershed. USFWS biologists initially selected 64 species that regularly inhabit the Gulf of Maine watershed that meet the following criteria:

- federally endangered, threatened and candidate species,
- migratory birds, anadromous and estuarine fish that are declining nationwide, and
- migratory birds, anadromous and estuarine fish that are threatened or endangered in two of the three states in the Gulf of Maine watershed.

In 2002, USFWS biologists added an additional 27 species of birds that have been identified as species of concern by the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, the Colonial Waterbird Plan and Partners in Flight.

Note: All species included in this analysis are listed on the reverse side.

Biologists determined habitat values for all species -- from actual sightings, or by developing habitat suitability models reflecting the environmental requirements for each species. Once habitat maps were completed for each species, biologists combined all of the maps to create a composite map identifying priority grassland, forest, freshwater wetland and estuarine habitat. In addition, individual parcels of land can be analyzed to identify the predicted habitat values for all 91 species on that parcel. All of this information is available to help conservationists and town planners focus habitat protection efforts in areas of greatest biological value. Results of this analysis have been used to help implement on-the-ground conservation initiatives, including:

- "Beginning with Habitat," an initiative that identifies and prioritizes high value habitat identified by our USFWS office, Maine Natural Areas Program and Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife in order to support pro-active protection and planning efforts conducted by state and federal agencies, town officials, non-governmental conservation partners and willing landowners,
- identification and prioritization of land with important habitat values in order to catalyze and support proposals for habitat protection through federal and state grant programs (including North American Wetlands Conservation Act grants, Coastal Wetland Grants, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Grants, Land for Maine's Future Program),
- educational/outreach activities with conservation partners, teachers and the media,
- comprehensive planning and management activities on national wildlife refuges,
- permit and license review by town, state and federal agencies, and
- contaminants and oil spill damage assessment and mitigation.

For further information, please contact:

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Gulf of Maine watershed priority species list

Note: Species in standard print include the original 64 species included in the analysis. Species in italics include the 27 additional migratory bird species of concern.

Birds (75 species):

American bittern
American black duck
American oystercatcher
American woodcock
Arctic tern
Bald eagle
Baltimore oriole
Bay-breasted warbler
Bicknell's thrush
Black scoter
Black tern
Black-bellied plover
Blackburnian warbler
Blackpoll warbler
Black-throated blue warbler
Blue-winged warbler
Buff-breasted sandpiper
Canada warbler
Cape May warbler
Chestnut-sided warbler
Common loon
Common snipe
Common tern
Eastern meadowlark
Field sparrow
Golden-winged warbler
Grasshopper sparrow
Hudsonian godwit
Killdeer
Least sandpiper
Least tern
Little blue heron
Little gull
Louisiana waterthrush
Marsh wren
Nelson's sharp-tailed sparrow
Northern flicker
Northern goshawk
Northern harrier
Olive-sided flycatcher
Osprey
Peregrine falcon
Pied-billed grebe
Piping plover
Prairie warbler
Purple sandpiper
Razorbill
Red crossbill
Red-headed woodpecker
Red knot
Red-shouldered hawk
Roseate tern
Ruddy turnstone
Saltmarsh sharp-tailed sparrow
Seaside sparrow
Sanderling
Scaup (greater and lesser)
Sedge wren
Semipalmated sandpiper
Short-billed dowitcher
Short-eared owl
Snowy egret
Solitary sandpiper
Spruce grouse
Surf scoter
Tricolored heron
Upland sandpiper
Veery
Whimbrel
Whippoorwill
White-winged scoter
Wood duck
Wood thrush
Yellow rail

Fish (9 species):

Alewife
American eel
American shad
Atlantic salmon
Atlantic sturgeon
Blueback herring
Bluefish
Shortnose sturgeon
Winter flounder

Plants (4 species):

Eastern prairie fringed orchid
Furbish's lousewort
Robbins' cinquefoil
Small whorled pogonia

Mammal:

Canada lynx

Invertebrate:

Horseshoe crab

Herps:

Plymouth redbelly turtle

